Helong language

Helong (alternate names Helon, Kupang and Semau[3]) is a Central Malayo-Polynesian language of West Timor. Speakers are interspersed with those of Amarasi. This language has become endangered as a result of its native speakers marrying those who do not speak Helong, and as a result of coming in contact with the outside community.[4] Helong speakers are found in four villages on the South-Western coast of West Timor, as well as on Semau Island, a small island just off the coast of West Timor.[5] The mostly Christian, slightly patriarchal society of Semau do their best to send their children away to Bali (or elsewhere) to earn money to send home.

Helong	
Native to	Indonesia
Region	West Timor
Native speakers	14,000 (1997)[1]
Language family	Austronesian - Malayo-Polynesian - Central–Eastern - Timor–Babar - West Timor **Helong**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	`heg`
Glottolog	`helo1243 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/helo1243)`[2]

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Location of the Helong Language in blue (Western Tip)

Classification

Helong is an Austronesian language, a group of languages spoken in Polynesia, an area north of Australia. Helong belongs to the Malayo-Polynesian branch of Austronesian languages, placing it among languages totaling over 385 million speakers. Helong shares its repetition of words in other words like *dua~dua* (English: pair) with the nuclear Malayo-Polynesian languages. Some languages in this family include Hawaiian, Samoan, Tahitian, and Fijian. The Endangered Languages Project has classified Helong as "vulnerable", based on the most recent data from 1997.[6] The largest threat to Helong is a dialect of Malay spoken in Kupang, called Kupang Malay, as the native Helong speakers often visit Kupang, and use that dialect when there.[5]

History

Helong was once the primary language spoken in Kupang, the capital of Indonesia located on the western tip of Timor. It was spoken by the Raja, or monarch. It is unknown when exactly the Raja stopped using Helong to speak, but the language has since fallen out of popularity, now used sparsely around Kupang, but mostly used on Semau Island just off the coast of Kupang.[7] In recent years, the people in Kupang have spoken a local dialect of Malay, resulting in Helong being largely forgotten by those who visit the capital city often. While the new language has left behind a lot of the region's history, experts believe that Helong speakers contain a vast wealth of knowledge around the past, specifically, the spreading of Atoni culture when the Dutch gave them weapons, which wiped out many of the other cultures that existed in West Timor, but leaving Helong traditions and culture widely intact.[8]

Grammar

Morphology

Helong word structure follows a standard C(C)V(C)V(C) (where (C) indicates that a consonant can appear here but does not have to) word structure. Additionally, there is always a consonant at the beginning of every non-clitic word. Ignoring suffixes, the last consonant in any word can only be a few things, the glottal or apical consonants found in the table in the Phonology section, with the exception of the letter d, which does not satisfy this rule. On the contrary, there are no such limits on the last vowel of a word, which can be any of the five.[5]

Syntax

Helong follows a VSO word order like the other languages closely related to it.[9][5] Helong is similar to languages like Spanish when it comes to noun-adjective order. The noun will come before the adjective describing it in a sentence. For example, *ana hmunan* directly translates as "child first", but refers to somebody's first child. However, unlike in Spanish, punctuation will only come at the end of a sentence. Like most languages, the first word of each sentence, as well as proper nouns are capitalized.[9] Helong uses negative modifiers to change the meaning of a sentence to the opposite. For example, "... *parsai lo"* means "do not believe", with *parsai* being a word meaning believe, and *lo* being a negative modifier.[9]

Vocabulary

Helong takes many loanwords, stems, suffixes, and prefixes from Malay, most of which are monosyllabic but can be bisyllabic as well. Helong does have its own idioms and sayings, and a majority of its vocabulary is original, taking stems from similar languages like Malay. There are not words for each specific relative on either side, just words like *baki* (uncle) describing rough relation, with the name of the individual being necessary to determine the exact relative.

Writing system

Helong uses the same Latin script used in the majority of languages around the world. While Helong does not use the full 26-character ISO basic Latin alphabet, but contains 27 characters total, which can be seen in the Phonology section below.[9][5] While most of Helong words are written in the same format as English words, one key difference is that when using modifiers such as plurals, distributive numerals, and frequencies, Helong uses Hyphens or Tildes to connect the base word to the modifier.[9]

For example, in the sentence "*Tode-s dua~dua le halin nahi-s deken"*, *tode* means lay, so tode-s would refer to laying multiple things, as the -s indicates plurality. *Dua* is the number two, so *dua~dua* would translate to the English "pair"

Phonology

Helong has 5 vowels: /a, e, i, o, u/. These vowels are identical to those in the English language, including the pronunciation.[5][9]

Consonants [5][9]

		Bilabial	Labiodental	Alveolar	Velar	Glottal
Stop	voiceless	p		t	k	ʔ
	voiced	b		d	g	
Fricative			f	s		h
Nasal		m		n	ŋ	
Approximant		w		l		
Trill				r		

The palatal stops /c, ɟ/ and the voiced labio-velar approximant /w/ are marginal phonemes, only occurring in a few loanwords.[10]

Numbers

Numbers 1-30					
mesa	1	hngul esa	11	buk dua beas esa or **buk dua-s esa**	21
dua	2	hngul dua	12	buk dua beas dua or **buk dua-s dua**	22
tilu	3	hngul tilu	13	buk dua beas tilu or **buk dua-s tilu**	23
aat	4	hngul aat	14	buk dua beas aat or **buk dua-s aat**	24
lima	5	hngul lima	15	buk dua beas lima or **buk dua-s lima**	25
eneng	6	hngul eneng	16	buk dua beas eneng or **buk dua-s eneng**	26
itu	7	hngul itu	17	buk dua beas itu or **buk dua-s itu**	27
palu	8	hngul palu	18	buk dua beas palu or **buk dua-s palu**	28
sipa	9	hngul sipa	19	buk dua beas sipa or	29

				buk dua-s sipa	
hngulu	10	buk dua	20	buk tilu	30

The Helong language uses words for each base unit (i.e. tens, hundreds, thousands). For example, the number 27 could be said as "tens two ones seven", indicating a 2 in the tens column and a 7 in the ones column.[9]

Base Units	
beas	ones
buk	tens
ngatus	hundreds
lihu	thousands
juta	millions

Ordinal numbers, with the exception of the word for first, simply add *ke* in front of the word for the number. Researchers have been unable to determine if *ke* is its own word, a prefix, or a proclitic.[9]

Ordinals			
hmunan	First	ke eneng	Sixth
ke dua	Second	ke itu	Seventh
ke tilu	Third	ke palu	Eighth
ke aat	Fourth	ke sipa	Ninth
ke lima	Fifth	ke hngulu	Tenth

Non-numeric quantity

Non-Numeric Quantity	
mamo, mamamo	many
toang, totang	all
hut, hutu	many (crowded)
mamo kose	plenty (many lots)
mamo tene	plenty (many big)
mamo naseke	too much (many excessive)
nuli	entire (complete)
ketang kaa to	way too many
ase	none, nothing
sii	alone, by yourself
mesa-mesa	each

'ketang kaa to' is a Helong idiom that translates directly as "cockatoos eating seeds", which they use as a saying to describe way too many of a specific item.[9]

Examples

The following are example sentences of Helong:[9]

Helong	Literal Translation	Actual Translation
Ni un ana ke lima la nia	This child fifth hers	This is her fifth child
Atuil at hngul dua na-s maa daek hulung	people ten two come work help	Those twelve people came to help
Laok nui kit hmake salat dua	go pick (person and self) tamarind cluster two	Let's go pick two bunches of tamarind
Bingin tilu halas-sam oen pait maa-s	day three just then 3 people return come-plural	In three days then they will come back
Kaim daad lelo ila lo se la-ng	we stay day several at distant place (general)	We stayed there for several days.
Oen tilu-s lii naseke	people 3-plural frighten too much	The three of them were very scared.
Minggua mesa-m oe dua	week one (pause) time two	Two times in one week.
Lahin oen maa-s se ia-s	yesterday people come-plural at close place	Yesterday they came here

References

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External links

- Helong Bible (http://www.e-alkitab.org/Helong/Conc/Root.htm)
- Documentation of three dialects of Helong: an endangered language of eastern Indonesia (https://web.archive.org/web/20160304075105/http://test.elar.soas.ac.uk/deposit/0183)
- Helong Project (https://helong.wordpress.com/about/)
- Helong video resources on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhrhuXuqMB0&list=PLcXFPx-z7B0oo94cA3jvOJetf_a7jRcLQ)